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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8309
INFO RHEHNSC/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 9439
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO PRIORITY 8752
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: WESTERN HEMISPHERE: VENEZUELA, CHAVEZ '
REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

Chavez's U-turn

Article in center-right O Estado de S.Paulo (6/11) says: "Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has traded darkness for light....He announced that 'Latin America has no place for guerillas any more....' The question that has echoed through the hemisphere-'what got into Chavez?'-has more than one answer to it. All of them...suggest he is finally convinced that the cost of protecting an organization that is repudiated by the vast majority of Colombians and has been harshly attacked by Bogot's administration greatly surpasses the benefits expected from a Bolivarian solidarity that could support Chavez's ambitions.... The dismantling of the Farc coincides with the reaction of Venezuelan democratic forces to Chavez's totalitarian plans.... Since [December's referendum] Chavez' popularity has fallen 20 points...and the prospects for the November elections are less favorable than he would like.... It is in this context that [Chavez's] u-turn fits.
White